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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [KIRF](#) [ECON](#) [EPET](#) [ENRG](#) [PTER](#) [IZ](#)  
SUBJECT: NINEWA: KRG-AFFILIATED ASSYRIAN LEADERS, SHABAK  
REPS HIGHLIGHT THREATS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Classified By: Ninewa PRT Leader Alex Laskaris, Reasons 1.4 (B) and (D)

This is a Ninewa Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) message.

¶1. (C) As part of an ongoing outreach effort to minority communities in Ninewah Province, PRT leader met separately with two prominent Assyrian Christians and four Shabak political activists. All were concerned about threats to their communities and sought continued USG engagement on the way forward.

¶2. (C) PRT members accepted a lunch invitation at the Bartalla home of prominent Assyrian businessman George Kako on July 16. We were joined by Fr. Aiman Danna, an Assyrian Catholic priest. Earlier on the same day, we met four Shabak members of the Supreme Council of Iraqi Muslims (ISCI), led by Bartala Branch Chairman Abu Zeneb. The others were Provincial Council members Muhammed Ibrahim Ali, Adnan Jafar and Mahmoud Muhammed Hussein.

3.(C) Kako and Danna cited high rates of migration, induced both by intimidation and lack of economic opportunities, as threats to the future of their community. (Note: They said that Bartala is a town of 15,000 people, of whom some 12,000 are Assyrian Catholics.) They communicated their opposition to UN envoy de Mistura, both to the substance of his proposals as well as to his mandate to consider the issue of disputed internal boundaries. Both made clear that they believe their community's interests are best served by alignment with the KRG. (Pointing out a late model BMW on his compound, Kako said it belonged to KRG Finance Minister Sarkis Aghajan.)

¶4. (C) The conversation with Abu Zeneb and his colleagues was a much broader two-hour discussion of the Iraqi landscape. While the discussed their party and its desire to participate in elections and subsequent democratic governance, they did not self-identify as Shabak. We spent the morning discussing the state of education, the impact of violence on childhood development, and the economic prospects of the rising generation. They communicated their vision of a democratic Iraq in which they said they hope to be stakeholders.

¶5. (C) PRT Comment: The minority communities within Ninewah Province are heterogeneous between and among themselves, especially on politically divisive questions like their relationship with the KRG. PRT Ninewah is preparing a comprehensive minority outreach strategy whose initial goal is ensuring that we reach out to all who wish to speak to us, always bearing in mind that the act of engaging the PRT and our regimental and division partners is inherently dangerous to our interlocutors. Thanks to swift action on the part of Embassy Baghdad's PD section, we were able to offer Kako ) on very short notice ) a voluntary visitor program in the US. This is an invaluable tool in our engagement, one that we will integrate into our broader efforts. End comment.

